AN: Well, TPYMK and Sarafina have yet another problem on their hands – and paws. How are they going to kill Moto? Or will they even do it? Let's find out…

Poison

Scavengers

"You are one messed-up guy, you know that?"

TPYMK and Sarafina were stood in the living room. The lioness looked as though she couldn't believe what she was hearing. She knew that TPYMK could be often predictable at times – but she had never expected *this* from him.

"I don't quite understand why you have a problem with my idea, Sarafina," TPYMK said, staring right into her eyes. "You do realise that—"

"No, I realise that what you're asking us to do is murder," Sarafina interrupted. "With a capital 'M'."

TPYMK narrowed his eyes. "And since when have you had a problem with murder before? Need I remind you that we had to kill Death and his pack of filthy degenerates—"

"That's not what I meant," Sarafina said. "They were *criminals*! Moto isn't a criminal. He only did drugs – he wasn't slinging 'em!"

"So what?" TPYMK shrugged. "Still a waste of space."

"I used to be a waste of space once," Sarafina said, staring down at the floor in admittance. "I've been a user *and* a dealer. I'm worse than him, so if anyone's getting killed, then it should be me first, right?"

"Sarafina, you have recovered from drugs," TPYMK countered. "Do you think that this… this Moto character shows any signs of giving up on using them anytime soon?"

"No," Sarafina said, "but still… He doesn't deserve to die."

"It's the only option," TPYMK said, "otherwise you will go to jail."

"Yeah, well… maybe I deserve it," Sarafina said.

TPYMK just stared at her. "*What*?"

He honestly couldn't believe what he was hearing. After all, Sarafina was the type of girl who would do anything to save her own skin. Unless somehow her conscience had suddenly altered and now she felt like she always had to do the moral thing. And, in this case, that was turning out to be a very bad thing indeed for TPYMK.

"I've been a pretty bad person, TPYMK," Sarafina told him. "Maybe… maybe this is right for me. I'm doing my time."

"Sarafina, listen to me," TPYMK said, kneeling down in front of her and placing both hands on her shoulders. "You are a good person. You helped me to take down the biggest drug empire in the world. If that's not good, then I don't know what is."

"But… we can't just kill the guy," Sarafina said. "That makes us criminals, too."

"I don't want you to go to jail for dealing drugs," TPYMK said. "As far as I'm concerned, you've been through enough in your life."

"Why do we have to kill him?" Sarafina asked. "Why can't we just pay him off or something? You know, like a bribe?"

TPYMK shook his head. "He'd go blabbering in an instant," he said. "Especially if the police offer him a better deal. This is the only way, Sarafina. It's either him or you – and I would choose you. *Always*."

Sarafina couldn't help but feel touched by that statement. It meant a lot to her to know that somebody cared. Still, the point stood: she didn't want to murder anyone else. There had to be a better way…

"Come on, TPYMK," Sarafina urged. "You're a detective."

"I *was* a detective," TPYMK said, reminding the lioness that his employment had since been terminated.

"You're smart, though," Sarafina said. "There has to be some other… thing we can do so Moto won't talk."

"Sarafina…" The lioness could see the truth in his blue eyes. "There's no other way."

Sarafina sighed deeply, walking towards the sofa. She plonked herself down on it, looking defeated.

"I thought all of this would be behind us," she muttered, stretching herself out on the sofa.

"All of our actions have consequences, Sarafina," TPYMK said. "Even the good ones."

"Yeah," Sarafina said, burying her head in her forepaws. "I know. God…"

"It's what has to be done," TPYMK assured her, sitting down beside Sarafina on the sofa. He placed a hand on one of her hind paws in an assuring gesture. "Come on. We can get through this."

"Unless something else comes up," Sarafina countered. "How the hell are we even supposed to bump him off, anyway?"

"I'll figure something out," TPYMK said.

"You'd better," Sarafina warned, "'cause a bullet to the head just isn't going to cut it this time."

TPYMK nodded in agreement. "I know," he said. "The police are going to be watching Moto like a hawk."

"So we're screwed?"

"No," TPYMK said. "Where there's a will, there's a way."

"And where there's smoke, there's fire," Sarafina retorted.

"Just what the hell are you talking about?" TPYMK said. "Have you been smoking weed again, or—"

"It means that things could get worse," Sarafina said. She rolled over onto her stomach. "Now, unless you're going to make me some supper, I'm going to sleep."

"I told you: you have a room now," TPYMK said. "You don't have to sleep on the sofa anymore."

Sarafina looked up at him. "Oh, yeah."

"And, by the way, supper is cheese on toast," TPYMK said. "It was a favourite of an old friend of mine."

The detective had stopped at the store on their way home, so the kitchen was now readily stocked with enough food and supplies for the month.

Sarafina shrugged. "Why not?"

The lioness's room wasn't too big. It was just right for her, though, as she really only wanted somewhere pleasant to sleep. A large desk stood to the left of the room and a cozy bed to the right. Nothing special, but she loved it.

Sarafina sat down on the edge of her bed, staring out of the window as she munched on a slice of the toast that TPYMK had made earlier. The pale moonlight shone through the glass, illuminating her face in a white glow. The lioness appreciated the serene atmosphere; it helped her to think.

So now we've gotta go killing again, she thought. *Goddamn jerkoff… He just can't leave it alone, can he?*

Sarafina was hoping that after the destruction of the Sumu lab, her involvement with drugs was over. Clearly, that wasn't the case, though. There had been clear repercussions that would have to be dealt with.

But would those create more repercussions in return?

On the bright side, thought Sarafina, *if you'd never met him, you'd be jabbing a needle into your leg right now.*

That was something, at least. As of now, Sarafina had no interest in ever taking drugs again. It had done too much damage to her in the past. Her life had almost been destroyed. Luckily, the withdrawal symptoms and the cravings had long since ended. She felt… normal again – and she thought that was a feeling she would never be able to reclaim.

We'll get through it, she assured herself, swallowing the last of her toast. *Together. It's not like I'm ever going to leave him…*

Suddenly, the lioness heard a knock on the door. Sarafina turned around to see TPYMK leaning in the open doorway. He was no longer wearing his long trenchcoat or fedora, and was simply smiling at her.

How long has he been there for?

"You okay?" he asked.

Sarafina nodded. "Uh… yeah," she said. "Just finishing off the toast. It was great, by the way."

"No problem." TPYMK walked into the room, and Sarafina realised that he was holding a glass of water. "Just thought I'd… leave a glass of water."

"Why?" Sarafina asked.

TPYMK shrugged as he sat down on the edge of the bed. "My mother always used to do that for me," he told her. "In case I… felt thirsty if I woke up in the middle of the night."

"Sounds like a good mother," Sarafina said. "Where is she now?"

"Dead."

"Oh. Yeah." Sarafina remembered that TPYMK was the last of his kind. The only human. "Sorry."

"Doesn't matter," TPYMK said. "What about your mother? Is she still around?"

"If she is, then I don't know where to find her," Sarafina said. "Can't even remember her name. Not because of drugs – she just wasn't around that much. And Dad died a while before I was born, so I never knew him."

"Well, I'm sorry to hear that," TPYMK told her.

"It's no big deal," Sarafina said. "I'm responsible for screwing up my life more than anyone else is."

"You've faced up to it, Sarafina," TPYMK said, "and you've turned your life around."

"I'll be okay," Sarafina said. She raised her eyebrows at the former detective, smiling. "I've never seen you without your coat before. Or your hat."

"I do sleep, Sarafina," TPYMK said. "You think I keep it on all the time?"

"Nice hair," she said, narrowing her eyes. "I've never noticed it before."

TPYMK's eyes widened slightly. "Well… thanks," he said. He placed the glass of water down on the windowsill. "I'll just leave this here, then." He stood up, straightening his shirt and heading for the doorway. "Goodnight."

Sarafina smiled. "Goodnight."

And, for the first time in a long while, Sarafina slept with a smile on her face.

"It's making a comeback."

A folder was slapped down on Detective Bora's desk. The detective looked up to see his partner, a lion called Askari.

"What do you mean?" Bora asked, narrowing his eyes. "The

cocaine?"

"No – the Sumu," Askari said, sitting down in a chair opposite Bora's desk. The detective's office wasn't very well-kept; there were papers and folders cluttering every surface. Despite his annoying nature, Bora was clearly a lion who worked hard at his job.

"You've gotta be kidding me," Bora said, staring at Askari in disbelief. "The moment I bring in that ball-licker Moto, it makes a comeback? Jesus – just how many of those dealers are out there?"

"We think it might be a new line of dealers," Askari told him. "Picking up the scraps from what Death left over. There wasn't just Sumu at the lab; a few animals could have gotten it from anywhere. And once they get a chemist on board—"

"They can analyse it and get the formula, so they can make more," Bora replied. "Yeah, I get it, Askari. Scavengers. How does this help me, though?"

"It doesn't," Askari said. "Just thought I'd let you know."

Bora sighed, leaning back in his chair. "Great. Now I gotta go catch more of them. After that jerkoff TPYMK testifies against Moto."

"You think he'll cooperate?" asked Askari.

"If he wants to save his sorry butt, then yes," Bora said.

"Forensics still haven't tracked down his partner," Askari said. "Those prints aren't very good. We might never catch him."

"He's probably split by now," Bora mused. "Left TPYMK with his little whore. Still, I'm more interested in him, anyway. That guy is hiding something… I know it."

"At least he's on our side," Askari said. "Supposedly."

"Guess you're right," Bora agreed, somewhat hesitantly. "I don't

expect him to go out and murder anyone else."

"So where is Moto now?" Askari said.

"Had to put him out on bail," Bora explained. "He wasn't talking. Either he's a very good liar, or his brain's the same size as his junk: tiny."

"I guess we'll just have to wait until something else turns up," Askari said, rising from the chair.

"Yeah," Bora said. "TPYMK's coming back tomorrow. Then maybe we'll get more answers."

"Well, like you said: he's not going to go out and murder anyone."

"I can't believe you're just gonna go out and murder someone," Sarafina said, staring at her friend.

TPYMK's hand gripped the steering wheel of the car. Sarafina had nicknamed it the Junk-Mobile, since that was all it looked like: a piece of junk. TPYMK had purchased it from a used dealer at a low price earlier in the morning, since he didn't want to arouse suspicion.

The detective and the lioness were sitting inside it right now, smack bang in the middle of an empty parking lot. An old derelict building was a few feet ahead of them; it looked as though it hadn't been used in years. A worn sign declared it as the 'Cheese-Mart' in faded lettering.

"We're not going to go out and murder someone," TPYMK said. "This has to be done without anyone tracing it back to us."

Sarafina was slouched lazily in the passenger seat, her hind paws resting on the glove compartment in front.

"And how is hanging around in a parking lot going to help us, huh?"

"I don't see how painting your toenails purple is going to help,

either," TPYMK retorted.

Sarafina glanced down at her hind claws, which were now a bright purple colour. "What? I wanted a makeover. New life, new look – you know?"

"*Purple*?" TPYMK said, narrowing his eyes. "Seriously? It looks like you've been poisoned."

"Blow me," Sarafina said. "I don't tell you how to wear your stupid hat."

TPYMK rolled his eyes. "Anyway, speaking of poison, that's why we're here."

"You wanna buy poison?" Sarafina asked, raising her eyebrows at him. "Oh – that's gonna go down well. They can trace that, you know – even if you do kill Moto with it."

"Not if you know which poison to choose," TPYMK said, peering out of the windscreen as another car pulled into the parking lot.

"This is gonna get us killed," Sarafina said. "Who the hell do you get poison from?"

"I know a guy who knows a guy," TPYMK said. "Wazimu knew his chemistry – and he knew his chemistry friends, too. I have more contacts than you might imagine."

"He doesn't look very friendly," Sarafina noted, watching as an enormous muscly lion climbed out of the car opposite. "Bet you anything he's hiding a gun up his butt."

"This isn't going to turn into a bloodbath, if that's what you're wondering," TPYMK said. "You can stay here, if you want."

"No way," Sarafina said, opening the passenger door. "Don't want you doing anything stupid."

"Fine," TPYMK said, opening his door and getting out of the car. "Let's do this."

TPYMK and Sarafina slowly approached the huge lion. The

lioness was amazed by how many muscles he had. *How the hell is he a chemistry nut?*

"The name's Chaos," the lion said. "I hear you're in the market for something special."

"*Chaos*?" Sarafina exclaimed. "What kind of a name is that?"

Chaos glanced down. "What's up with your toenails – you wanna glow in the dark or something?"

TPYMK and Sarafina just glared at each other.

"Look, pleasantries aside, we just want something that will poison a person – a cub, at that – in an untraceable manner," TPYMK explained. "We can pay cash."

"I think I've got something," Chaos nodded. "Follow me."

He gestured for the two to follow him around to the back of the car.

Sarafina stopped TPYMK before they could join him. "You sure this is safe?"

TPYMK stared into her eyes. "If something goes wrong, then I will protect you."

"Oh, that makes me feel better."

"Just move it," TPYMK said, pushing her along.

TPYMK and Sarafina followed Chaos around to the back of his car. The huge lion lifted open the trunk, leaving them both amazed at the sight of all the chemicals stored inside. Sarafina had never seen so many bags and beakers in her life.

Whatever we need, Sarafina thought, *it's gonna be huge. Like a… like a disintegration cannon or something.*

"I've got *just* what you need," Chaos said, reaching into the trunk.

He pulled out a tiny plastic bag, no bigger than someone's

thumb. The excited look on Sarafina's face soon fell.

Chaos held up the miniscule bag, allowing TPYMK to catch a glimpse of the contents inside.

"It looks like… *beans*," Sarafina said, now more confused – and disappointed – than ever.

"What is it?" TPYMK asked, staring at the bag.

"It's ricin," Chaos explained. "Pretty much the perfect way of poisoning a person. Slip this into their food, and within three days, they'll be dead."

"And it's untraceable?" TPYMK asked.

Chaos nodded. "Yep," he said. "No taste, no smell. As long as they ingest it, you won't have a problem."

"Sounds good," TPYMK said, turning to Sarafina. "What do you think?"

"Yeah. Great," said Sarafina, masking her dismay. *I wanted a disintegration cannon, though…*

"How much is this going to cost us?" TPYMK asked.

"Let's just say I hope you're rich," Chaos said. "It's not easy to get this stuff."

"We've got the money," TPYMK said.

"We *have*?" Sarafina exclaimed. She spoke in a hushed whisper to TPYMK. "You just bought a house—"

"I have more saved than you think," TPYMK said. "Let's just leave it at that."

"So are you taking it or not?" Chaos asked.

TPYMK stared the lion in the eyes. "Yes. We'll take it."

"$50,000," Sarafina gasped, slamming her door shut as they climbed back into the car. "You paid $50,000 – for *beans*.

Where the hell do you get this money from?"

"That's not the point right now," TPYMK said. "The point is that we need to find Moto."

"What, you don't know where he is?" Sarafina said. "Jesus Christ – this keeps getting worse."

"The police have probably granted him bail, which means he's either in some cheap motel or he actually has some kind of a house. He has to be within the city; HPD are going to be keeping a close eye on him."

"So how are we gonna find him?" Sarafina asked. "'Cause that's the big question. Poison or no poison; if we can't find him, we're screwed."

"We always seem to be 'screwed' with you," TPYMK said, staring at her. "Can't you think a little more positively?"

"Hey, I've been screwed a lot more than you—"

"Oh, I know that," TPYMK chuckled. "Sarafina: the Casanova of the jungle. Don't think I don't remember those Mixer things you told me about."

"Yeah – it was stupid," Sarafina agreed, "but we're not here to talk about that. I want to talk about *now*. The present. You know – that stuff that's actually *important*."

"I'll find him," TPYMK said. "I have to go back to the police station tomorrow; they want to talk to me more. I'll see if I can pull a report on him then. There has to be a record of his current whereabouts somewhere."

"And then what?" Sarafina asked.

"You're going to have to administer the poison," TPYMK said.

"What?" Sarafina laughed. "No way!"

"Yes way," TPYMK retorted. "You know Moto. He's not going to think anything of it if you meet up for another 'cuddle buddy'

session, or whatever the hell you call it."

"But—"

"You know I can't do it," TPYMK interrupted. "There's no other choice, Sarafina. It's either this – or prison. You'd better make your mind up, because my interest is protecting you and myself. We've come too far to let a degenerate like him wreck our lives again."

Sarafina sighed deeply, slouching in her seat once more. "Fine. I'll do it."

"Good," said TPYMK. "I'll find him. You do the rest."

"Whatever," Sarafina said, putting her seatbelt on. "Let's just get out of here – before someone else tries to kill us."

"Fine." TPYMK started the car, and within seconds they were pulling out of the parking lot.

"You're right, you know," Sarafina said, staring at her hind claws.

"Well, I have often told you that we have to save our—"

"No," Sarafina cut in. "The purple toenails are a bit too strong."

TPYMK stared at her in amazement. "What?"

"How about green?"

"That's even worse."

AN: It seems that TPYMK and Sarafina have acquired some poison to take him out. But with HPD keeping an eye on Moto, that might be easier said than done. And the Sumu trade seems to be starting up again. Who are these 'scavengers', though? Hmm…